



SELECTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS' TOOLKIT

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WELCOME

UON's vision is to stand as a global leader distinguished by a commitment to equity and excellence and to creating a better future for its regions through a focus on innovation and impact. To achieve that we need to recruit remarkable academic and professional staff who actively contribute to our reputation for innovative and engaged teaching and research.

This toolkit has been developed to guide new and existing Selection Committee members through the recruitment and selection process. To support Selection Committees in selecting the best talent while delivering a consistent, fair and equitable recruitment process, we have introduced a short [online training module](#) which all Chairs of Selection Committees are required to complete prior to chairing a Selection Committee. It is an internal audit requirement for the training to be completed annually.

The Human Resource Services (HRS) Recruitment Team is responsible for the coordination of recruitment and selection processes at the University. The Recruitment Team support selection committees with the provision of expert advice and oversee all activities leading to the selection and subsequent appointment of the preferred candidate. As such, you should rely upon the Recruitment Team for any queries or concerns you may have.

Thank you for your important contribution to the staff selection process at the University of Newcastle.

Tina Crawford
Director

PEOPLE AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY - HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES

1. Selection Committee

The formation of the Selection Committee should generally occur before the position is advertised.

Committees should comprise members from diverse backgrounds and have appropriate gender representation to contribute to the fair assessment of applicants' skills, capabilities, experience, knowledge, potential and fit for the position. Selection Committee composition should be consistent with the following procedures:

- Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Academic and Professional Staff Procedure
- Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Senior Staff Procedure
- Recruitment, Selection and Appointment of Research Staff Procedure

All Selection Committees **must** be composed of:

- Appropriate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) representation where candidates have identified themselves as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander;
- Membership that is gender inclusive (a minimum of 33% of the Committee must be from each gender) or in particular circumstances as close to 33% as possible; and
- A committee member external to the School/ Unit.

2. Confidentiality

Committee Members must observe strict confidentiality in regard to all aspects of staff selection and not disclose any details of applicants or discuss aspects of the selection process with any person within or external to the University who is not on the Selection Committee, other than appropriate staff within the Human Resource Services team.

Unless expressly authorised by the Chair, members of the Selection Committee are not to contact referees, or seek information on applicants from current or former employers, or work colleagues.

3. Conflicts of Interest

Where a Committee Member believes that their knowledge of an individual (by virtue of professional, social or private association, or any other factor) may influence their decision, they must declare to the Chair of the Committee that they have a conflict of interest. This will mean a declaration of any financial, family or other close personal relationship with any applicant for the position.

The Chair, in consultation with the HRS Recruitment Team, will decide on appropriate action, which may require the committee member to withdraw from the Committee.

See [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#)

4. Shortlisting

Shortlisting must be conducted independently by all members of the Selection Committee to ensure applications are assessed objectively and fairly. The Human Resource Services Recruitment Team will provide support and advice if required.

Committee Members should compare the skills, experience and qualifications of each applicant with the job requirements listed in the position description. The purpose of this process is to select the best candidates to proceed to the interview stage of the recruitment process.¹

Selection Committees may choose to shortlist a candidate from an under-represented group (eg. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women or men depending on the workgroup, people with a disability or people from non-English speaking or ethnic backgrounds), who meets the selection criteria but who may not be one of the strongest candidates.

Committee Members must prepare a shortlist of applicants in accordance with the selection criteria as specified in the position description. Not all candidates who meet the selection criteria are required to be invited for interview.

4.1. Procedure

All Committee Members must:

- i. independently complete the shortlisting form available in the 'My Recruitment' section of HRonline;
- ii. forward the form to Human Resource Services prior to the shortlisting meeting; and
- iii. retain shortlisting notes so they can discuss the candidates' applications at the shortlisting meeting.

4.2. Techniques

A Selection Data Matrix will be provided to assist with shortlisting. Alternatively, committee members may make notes, summaries, etc. Whichever method is used to shortlist, it is important to note:

- i. shortlisted applicants should be able to demonstrate their ability to meet the selection criteria in their application;
- ii. where a large number of applicants meet the selection criteria, a further shortlisting can be undertaken based on criteria that have been prioritised; and
- iii. care must be taken not to inadvertently discriminate against applicants – be consistent and fair.

Committee Members must not exclude applicants on the basis of:

- work experience gained overseas, or with overseas qualifications before the qualifications have been checked for acceptability (this applies equally to academic, professional, trade and school qualifications);
- assumptions of their English-speaking proficiency;
- a disability, based on assumptions regarding their ability to perform the full range of duties of the position;

¹ Selection criteria often contain a statement relating to equivalent skills and experience. Sound judgement and discretion should be exercised to ensure that applicants are not excluded where subsequent training and/or development might resolve or address the requirement.

- assumptions regarding pregnancy or caring responsibilities;
- job-related experience obtained in unpaid activities such as voluntary or community-based work;
- over-qualified candidates, on the assumption that they will soon move on or will get bored with the job; or
- their current residential address.

4.3. Shortlisting Meeting

The Committee will generally meet to compare each shortlist and reach a consensus on who is to be interviewed. The Human Resource Services Recruitment Team will generally facilitate the shortlisting meeting where the Committee Members will decide on the candidates to be interviewed.

Discussions should be restricted to the selection criteria and duties outlined in the position description. Information that is irrelevant or pertaining to private matters (regardless of the source) must not be introduced into discussions.

The shortlisting meeting should establish:

- i. whether there are any potential conflicts of interest between Committee Members and applicants;
- ii. which candidates are to be interviewed;
- iii. the seminars or presentations that are required;
- iv. whether additional selection techniques are required such as psychometric testing, site visits, work sample tests, background checking or pre-employment medical assessments;
- v. questions for interview;
- vi. suitability of phone/video conferencing for applicants in remote areas;
- vii. whether the listed referees are appropriate; and
- viii. whether referees should be contacted prior to interview.

5. Interviews

5.1. Preparing Interview Questions

The position description contains the selection criteria which should form the basis for interview questions.

The aim is to create relevant, unambiguous questions that are free from bias so that no group in society is advantaged or disadvantaged.

The committee should prepare a set of questions that ask about a candidate's:

- Skills
- Knowledge
- Competencies
- Previous job and life experiences
- Qualifications
- Understanding of the position requirements

In preparing questions, the committee should openly discuss the knowledge, skills, competency and experience they expect candidates to address in their responses. This ensures that committee members who may not have expertise in the particular area will know what to expect in the answer. The strategy also ensures that each interviewee is evaluated against the same criteria.

The purpose of questioning is to:

- i. determine how well the applicant could perform the duties of the job;
- ii. determine how well the applicant meets the selection criteria;
- iii. identify the person who best demonstrates their ability to meet the advertised selection criteria;
- iv. identify which candidates do not meet certain criteria; and
- v. clarify any issues or ambiguities in the candidate's application.

5.2. Preparing the Venue

Arrange the venue appropriately:

- choose a comfortable and private room with adequate lighting
- remove any visible or audible distractions (telephone / paging systems / notice boards/ white boards with writing on them)
- ensure appropriate seating arrangements
- consider the location of seating for candidates with known hearing, sight or physical disabilities.

A good interview will allow information to flow between the candidate and Selection Committee members. Establish an open and friendly rapport with the candidate as soon as possible to help them overcome any anxiety or nervousness they may be experiencing.

5.3. Role of the Chair

It is the role of the Chair to manage the interview by:

- i. welcoming external committee members and ATSI representatives to the committee and explaining their role to the other members;
- ii. ensuring a consistent and equitable approach to the interview process;
- iii. encouraging the interviewee to reply fully to questions;
- iv. stopping a candidate who talks too much;
- v. calling for copies of publications and/or journal articles (where these have been requested);
- vi. setting the pace to ensure all questions are covered;
- vii. ensuring that committee members do not discuss candidates' performance until the deliberations;
- viii. managing the interview schedule;
- ix. bringing the interview to conclusion; and
- x. providing post-interview feedback to internal staff members.

6. Conducting the Interview

6.1. Greet the Candidate

The Chair should:

- i. walk to the waiting area and greet the candidate before they enter the interview room;
- ii. open the conversation with an informal question (eg weather, car parking, etc.); and
- iii. seat the candidate and introduce them to the selection committee members.

6.2. Set the Scene

The Chair should advise the candidate that:

- i. the committee will ask questions relating to experience, skills etc.;
- ii. the candidate may ask questions and offer further information at the conclusion of the interview;
- iii. the interview is expected to take xx minutes; and
- iv. committee members will take notes throughout the interview for later recollection.

The Chair should also provide a brief overview of the job and the workplace:

- a. explain where the position sits in the school/unit
- b. advise how many people are in the team
- c. explain resources / constraints / challenges.

6.3. Questioning style

Committee members should:

- i. ask questions consistently for all candidates. This gives the interview direction and allows the candidate to provide relevant information on which the selection committee can make useful comparisons with other candidates; and
- ii. probe further into a candidate's answer if the Committee feels that the candidate is off track or if they have not answered the question fully.
- iii. ask clarifying questions about employment history if there appears to be a gap in the candidate's CV. Ask why, how and when the candidate left previous positions, as well as any resulting period of time not covered by employment.

(see 'Appendix 3- Questioning Techniques' attached)

6.4. Invite Questions from the Candidate

As well as specific questions relating to the School/Unit, the Selection Committee should be prepared for more general questions from the candidate such as:

- i. strategic direction of the University;
- ii. staff training and development opportunities;
- iii. annual and sick leave entitlements;
- iv. flexible work arrangements;
- v. relocation assistance; and
- vi. salary. Do not enter into salary negotiations during the interview. These discussions can lead candidates to believe that their salary expectations are part of the selection decision. If you feel it is necessary to discuss salary at the interview stage, please contact the HRS Recruitment Team for advice.

6.5. Close the Interview

The Chair should:

- i. advise the candidate what will happen next and when they can expect to hear the outcome; and
- ii. thank the candidate for his/her interest in applying for a position at the University.

7. Deliberations

7.1. After Final Interview

After the last candidate is interviewed, evaluate all relevant information (application, interview, task, seminar, referee reports, site visit, work sample test, psychometric test etc.) to select the most suitable candidate on merit.

7.2. Process

- the HRS Recruitment Team will facilitate the deliberations and provide advice on policy or procedure;
- all candidates should be ranked individually against the selection criteria by each Committee Member;
- Committee Members should each discuss the rationale behind their ranking;
- external Committee Members should ideally offer their ranking and rationale first; and
- the Chair should provide their comments last so as to not influence other committee members.

The Selection Committee may not be able to decide on the preferred candidate at this stage as they may not feel they have sufficient information to make a decision. If this is the case, the Committee should reconvene when further information (such as referee reports) is to hand. Reconvening may be through a meeting or via electronic means.

Private information, hearsay, or information from outside or personal sources **must not** be introduced into discussion or consideration of suitability (other than nominated referee reports).

Differences of opinion should be seen as both natural and helpful as generally a difference in opinion will result in more thorough consideration of all information.

Committee Members should agree on the ranking of applicants. However, if an impasse occurs, the committee should consider alternative courses of action such as:

- i. second-round interviews; or
- ii. additional referee information.

The committee also needs to consider:

- acceptance or rejection of the first offer;
- suitability of second and third ranked candidates; and
- creation of an eligibility list to be accessed within a six-month timeframe (ie. for similar positions that may become available).

Outcomes are confidential and must not be discussed by Committee Members outside of the selection proceedings.

Further information regarding 'Equity Considerations' and 'Hazards in Selection' are available from Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

7.3. Suitable Candidate Not Identified

If no suitable candidate is identified, the recruitment process should recommence.

It is imperative that the Hiring Manager and the Selection Committee are satisfied that they have selected the best person for the position after assessing all the available information gathered from the selection process. A wrong selection decision could create a range of issues for the Hiring Manager including; inability to meet team goals/ KPIs, staff morale problems and the time involved with managing poor performance

If the Selection Committee does not believe that one of the interviewed candidates could perform the role effectively then all candidates should be listed as 'not appointable' on the Selection Committee Report. The Hiring Manager may then decide to:

- re-advertise the position;
- re-frame the selection criteria to better reflect the skills needed to perform the job and then re-advertise the position; or
- redesign the position in consultation with their HR Business Partner.

8. Documentation

Using a Selection Committee Report Form, the HRS Recruitment Team member will complete the various sections of the form to accurately document the selection process. .

Notes from verbal referee reports are to be provided as an attachment to the Selection Committee Report Form.

All Selection Committee Members' paperwork and hand-written notes relating to shortlisting and interview should be given to the Recruitment Team at the conclusion of the recruitment process. Human Resource Services will then store and destroy the documentation in line with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*.

9. Reference Checks

9.1. Process

All applicants are required to provide the names and contact details of three (3) referees who are familiar with their skills and abilities. A current or recent supervisor should be one of the three referees.

The Chair should follow up verbally with referees of the preferred candidate/s (or, at a minimum, the first-ranked candidate). The Chair must receive a reference check from at least two (2) appropriate referees, preferably three (3) or more referees.

Follow up phone calls with referees may be useful in clarifying issues, for example, the degree of an applicant's involvement in a project mentioned at interview or to check the level of communication skills, if an applicant appeared nervous at the interview.

Questions asked of referees should be designed to be free of bias to allow for objective decision-making and should be well structured in terms of the selection criteria.

Unless expressly authorised by the Chair, the members of the Selection Committee are not to contact referees, or seek information on applicants from current or former employers, or work colleagues.

Where a Selection Committee or Chair is concerned that certain appropriate referees haven't been provided by the candidate eg. current or previous supervisor, the Chair may speak to the candidate about why such a referee has not been provided and whether it is appropriate for them to be contacted with the candidate's permission.

A written record detailing the nature of verbal reference checks must be made on the Reference Check Form.

9.2. Suitable referees

A Selection Committee member should not be a referee, unless otherwise approved by the Manager, Recruitment and Support Services.

In the case of academic positions, selection committee members are often referees due to the nature of research specialties. The Chair will need to make a decision as to whether the committee member can remain independent on the committee if they also act as a referee.

10. Approval

Following completion of the Selection Committee Report, the HRS Recruitment Team will submit the selection recommendation for approval.

A verbal or written offer of employment cannot be made until the appropriate delegated officer has approved the appointment.

11. Make the Offer

11.1. Verbal Offer

Upon notification of approval from the HRS Recruitment Team, the Chair will contact the successful candidate by phone and advise them that a formal offer will be made.

The preferred candidate should generally be offered remuneration at step 1 of the relevant HEW / Academic level. A higher level step may be approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor or the Director where the candidate has significant additional experience for the role and the need to be competitive in the market justifies a higher step. As a general rule, all initial offers of employment should be made at step 1.

A letter of offer will then be produced by Human Resource Services and sent to the successful candidate.

It is important to note that from a legal perspective, a verbal offer of employment is binding upon the University. It is hence the University's practice that the Chair advises that the offer will be made in writing but does not make a verbal offer when contacting the successful candidate.

11.2. Letter of Offer

A letter of offer will be produced by Human Resource Services (HRS) and sent to the successful candidate. The written offer sets out the terms and conditions of employment of the appointment.

The successful candidate is required to formally accept the offer in writing within a specified period of time.

A new staff member must have a letter of appointment signed by both an authorised representative of the University and by the new staff member prior to commencing employment with the University. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure this is in place and to delay the start of the employee should the signed letter of appointment not be in place.

12. Notify Unsuccessful Candidates

12.1. Interviewees

The HRS Recruitment Team will contact unsuccessful interviewees to inform them of the outcome of their application.

It is recommended that the Chair notify unsuccessful candidates who are currently employees working in the Unit/School where the position was advertised.

12.2. Other Applicants

All candidates receive a generic notification at the time they submitted their application stating that 'if you have not heard from the University within 30 days of submitting your information then, unfortunately, your application has been unsuccessful'.

Candidates who were not shortlisted do not receive a specific notification from Human Resource Services to notify them that they were unsuccessful.

13. Provide Post-selection Feedback

Post-selection feedback may be offered by the Chair to internal candidates who are unsuccessful at short listing and/or interview.

The Chair should plan to:

- explain the aims of the meeting;
- refer to the selection criteria and notes from the interview;
- relate discussion solely to the criteria;
- provide positive feedback first; and
- indicate areas for improvement, suggest training and career development options, outline information available on UON's Mindtools website, and provide hints on ways to improve in future interviews.

Avoid:

- personal criticisms or reflection;
- discussion regarding other applicants;
- comparative comments or statements; or
- debate on the outcome.

Appendix 1- Equity Considerations

a) Equity Considerations

Be aware that cultural differences may influence certain behaviour. In some cultures it is polite to speak quietly, or considered disrespectful to make direct eye contact with persons perceived to be in authority.

Committee members should commit to merit-based selection techniques that conform to the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and value diversity. Federal and State legislation underpins and promotes equitable processes.

Under-represented groups are people affected by disadvantage, either historically or currently. This can include discrimination, in various aspects of employment. These groups include:

- women;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait island people;
- people from a non-english speaking, or ethnic background; or
- people with a disability.

Discrimination is treating someone unfairly because they belong to a particular group. In Australia, it is against the law for an employer to discriminate against an employee or job applicant due to their:

- age;
- gender or trans-gender identification;
- pregnancy;
- disability (includes past, present or possible future disability);
- race, colour, ethnic or ethno-religious background, descent or nationality;
- marital status;
- carer's responsibilities; or
- sexual preference or persuasion.

Where selection processes are planned and conducted appropriately, applicants are evaluated against objective and relevant selection criteria. This reduces the likelihood of equity-related issues.

b) Disability and Impairment

Where a candidate with a disability is considered to be the best person for the position, every effort should be made to make reasonable workplace adjustments. Some adjustment may be required for the primary and secondary duties to accommodate the knowledge, skill and ability the candidate would bring to the role.

The Committee should not deliberate as to how effective reasonable workplace or technical adjustments may be. Rather, they should consider the candidate based upon their merit for the position and seek the advice of the Health and Safety Team, and the Equity and Diversity Manager in Human Resource Services.

Where specialist advice is necessary, Human Resource Services may arrange consultation through an appropriate organisation (e.g, the Royal Blind Society). Funding is available through a variety of sources for the purchase of specialised equipment, or modifications to the workplace where required.

c) Hearing Impairment

When interviewing applicants who lip-read, arrange the room so that applicants are seated with any bright light sources (e.g. a window) behind them. When speaking, ensure that you are facing the applicant. Speak a little more slowly and distinctly than usual, but avoid exaggeration of lip movement. Avoid gesturing around your face because it can be distracting and can block the view of your lips.

Some applicants may require the services of a signing interpreter to facilitate communication at the interview. This can be arranged in advance by Human Resource Services. When an applicant is assisted by a signing interpreter, the interpreter should stand or sit next to the particular Committee Member asking the questions, so that the applicant can easily shift her/his gaze from the interpreter to interviewer and back again. Maintain eye contact with the interview candidate, and not the signing interpreter. Ask questions directly to the candidate, not the interpreter.

d) Visual Impairment & Blindness

Visual impairment is the partial loss of sight to varying degrees. Blindness is full loss of sight.

Upon meeting with a visually impaired or blind candidate, ask if and how they wish you to assist them. Escort applicants with a visual disability into the room by offering your arm and guiding the individual to their seat. Place the applicant's hand on the back of the seat.

Introduce the Committee Members by name and title in order of seating arrangement.

A common mistake that many sighted people make is to speak more loudly when they address a sight-impaired person on the assumption the person cannot hear normally. Rooms with low light levels or with bright/dull light contrasts should be avoided if either a Committee Member or an applicant has a partial sight loss.

e) Physical Disability

Access may present difficulties to any candidate, regardless of the nature of their disability.

Where possible, interviews should be scheduled in a venue that is readily accessible to suitable parking, or set-down and pick-up.

Ensure that interviews which are not held in a ground-floor room have easy access to a lift.

The venue should also have ready access to disabled toilet facilities. These facilities should also be checked prior to the interviews.

Appendix 2- Hazards in Selection

It is important that Committee members are aware of these common hazards in the selection process and do not impose an 'unconscious bias' on certain candidates.

a) **First impressions**

Initial impressions of a candidate biases the interviewer either for or against them.

b) **"Halo" effect**

Where a Committee Member is so impressed by one attribute of a candidate that they will attribute positive qualities for all other criteria regardless of the evidence.

c) **Leniency or strictness**

Where candidates are appraised either too leniently, or too strictly.

d) **Primacy and Recency**

A tendency to recall the first few or last few candidates only, (hence the importance of written interview notes).

e) **"Outsiders"**

A tendency to give a lower estimate to a candidate because they are not from "within" the organisation or, because their current workplace or role is looked upon in less favourable terms.

f) **Over-emphasis on the interview**

Some Selection Committees try to glean information on the full range of selection criteria during interviews. It has been shown, however, that not all capabilities are reliably and validly assessable at interview. Some information, such as applicant's efficiency and standard of work, can be assessed by other means. Interpersonal abilities may best be checked verbally with nominated referees or assessed during a site visit and other skills may be best assessed through tests, set tasks, presentations and work samples.

g) **Rushed final decision**

Selection Committees sometimes fail to consider all the available information and instead make hasty decisions based on impressions. In other cases, the majority vote prevails, with some members changing their minds or having to accept a decision about which they still have serious doubts.

h) **Future capacity of the applicant is not considered**

It is important to ensure that undue weight is not given to lack of skills which may be overcome by a short period of on-the-job training. An applicant may lack some ability in written work, but in all aspects is the best candidate. Where a deficiency is not serious enough to prevent the applicant from performing the main duties of the job, the committee should consider whether a period of training would be sufficient to develop the applicant's writing skills in an acceptable period of time.

Conversely, some skills are very difficult to develop if they haven't been exhibited during a career to date. These include such complex skills as leadership capability and strategic thinking. If these are essential to the role and not evident during the selection process, it is probably unlikely that these can be effectively developed in the role in a short period of time and it is probably best to continue to search for a candidate who has already demonstrated these capabilities.

Appendix 3-Questioning Techniques

Factors such as the context, order and manner in which questions are asked are important. Be flexible in the use of question types to cover all criteria for all candidates.

Ensure that questions are short, clear and unambiguous in order that the candidates do most of the talking. Introduce each area of questioning and probe appropriately before moving on.

Listen carefully to the answers. This will:

- allow assessment of comprehension, vocabulary and articulation of thoughts into speech;
- prompt further questions where required; and
- prompt rephrasing of questions if a candidate cannot answer or shows little understanding.

1. Types of Questions

a) Behavioural Questions

Behavioural interviewing is based on the theory that past behaviour predicts future behaviour. A selection committee needs to know what a candidate has done rather than what they would or might do.

For example, if one of the criteria for an administrative position was around “Planning & Organising”, do not ask an interviewee, “Tell us how you would manage a busy day”. Instead ask: *“Tell us about a time when you faced conflicting priorities and how you determined the top priority”*.

Example: *“Accomplishing team goals requires that all team members fulfil their responsibilities. Tell us about what you’ve done to help clarify a specific team member’s roles and responsibilities.”*

Example: *“Making a formal presentation can be very challenging. Tell us about a presentation that you wish you could do over?”*

Responses to behavioural questions must meet the STAR (Situation/Task, Action, Result) principle by including the following:

- **Situation/Task** (What was the background/context)
- **Action** (What the candidate said or did in response to a situation/task)
- **Result** (The effect of the candidate’s actions)

As many candidates provide partial STARS (missing information) or false STARS (vague, theoretical/future-based or opinions) you may need to ask several follow-up questions to evaluate the candidate for that Target. All follow-up questions should be phrased in the behavioural style to ensure you receive the information you need.

b) Scenario Questions

Scenarios frame hypothetical situations for candidates. Interviewers can then use the scenario as the basis of questions.

Example: *“There are days when this position can be very busy. The phone will be ringing, students will be waiting at the counter and you may be the only staff member*

working. Can you tell us about a time when you had to deal with a similar situation and what strategies you used?"

Scenario questions are often less valuable than behavioural questions in providing a Selection Committee with an understanding of the candidates' demonstrated competencies. Scenario questions can be helpful at understanding how a candidate considers a situation and makes choices, which may be a selection criteria for some roles.

c) Motivation Questions

During the job interview process, the selection committee should not only check whether the person has the required skills and experience for the position, they should also try to observe whether the person has the self motivation to sustain in a job and to ensure that the person delivers his/her best in the role.

To find this out, the interviewer should ask a motivational question.

Example: *"Why do you want to work at the University of Newcastle?"*

Example: *"Tell us about one of the most exciting aspects of your previous job?"*

d) Theoretical/ Knowledge/ Opinion Questions

This type of questioning can be useful when interviewing senior leaders or academic staff. These questions test the candidates' knowledge of the work environment and their experience with the subject matter.

Example: *"The Australian University sector is entering a period of immense change. What do you think are the major challenges and opportunities ahead for the University?"*

2. Suitable questioning techniques

a) Open questions

Open questions often start with "tell us", "what", "how", "when", or "why" and encourage candidates to think through their responses. Open questions encourage candidates to speak more freely.

Example: *"Tell us a little about the most important project you have worked on in your current position?"*

b) Follow-up questions

Follow-up questions seek more information relating to the previous question. These questions are spontaneous rather than planned.

Example: (Candidate) *"I had some responsibility for the Project".*

(Interviewer) *"What were the responsibilities you had?"*

c) Mirroring questions

Mirroring questions re-state the interviewee's previous answers and invite them to add further information

Example: (Candidate) *"I had to motivate the project team each day."*

(Interviewer) *"The project team required motivation?"*

(Candidate) *"Yes. We would meet briefly in the morning to discuss ideas and opportunities for improvements that would keep the project on track. Everyone looked forward to the briefings."*

3. Questions to Avoid

a) Leading/Loaded questions

These do not generate original thought and could make a candidate defensive.

Example: *"It seems that you don't really like dealing with customers do you?"*

b) Double-barrelled questions

These questions confuse candidates and reflect a lack of clarity and planning by the committee.

Example: *"Tell me what you like most about your current job and where you have been able to demonstrate the best use of your initiative?"*

c) Closed questions

Closed questions elicit a yes/no response and provide little value other than to establish facts.

Example: *"Were you in charge of the Project?"*

d) Trick questions / Stress Tactics

These questions are very stressful for applicants and can be counterproductive.

Example: *"You say you don't like conflict. Would you agree then that you wouldn't stand up to a manager that you disagreed with?"*

e) Questions based on stereotypes or assumptions

Questions relating to marital status, parenting, physicality, residential address, family composition or care arrangements should not be asked. Candidates may willingly offer personal information but questions should not be asked in this area.

Example: *"Will you need to leave work early in order to pick up your kids from school?"*

f) Questions on culture or ethnicity

These are only important where knowledge of a particular language or culture is a requirement for a position.

4. Equity Questions

As a Selection Committee Member, it is necessary to understand the implications of the different levels of equity knowledge and/or experience for different positions to ensure that appropriate equity questions are asked at the interview.

Non-Supervisory Positions

- Capacity to deal effectively with students from diverse backgrounds
- Cross-cultural communication skills
- Understanding of equity principles

These require a basic understanding of major equity terms and of legislation. Since Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) has been around since the 1980s, all applicants

should have a minimum knowledge of terms such as EEO, affirmative action, equity and diversity.

Supervisory Positions

- Knowledge of and ability to apply equity and diversity principles
- Knowledge and understanding of equity and diversity issues for staff and students in higher education

These involve knowing how to implement equity principles and understanding responsibilities as a supervisor and issues relating to the higher education sector.

Examples of employment equity that supervisors would experience on a day-to-day basis would include:

- ensuring staff had access to information;
- secondment opportunities;
- rotations and opportunities to act in higher 'duties';
- encouraging staff to undertake training programs for both work and personal related development;
- ensuring the environment for students and staff is free from harassment and discrimination; and
- handling grievances.

Senior Management/Management Positions

- Demonstrated understanding of and commitment to the principles of equity, and a willingness and capacity to implement equity plans and policies

At this level, applicants should understand direct and indirect discrimination and be aware of staff and student equity-related plans and strategies. Applicants should have a record of implementing equity policy in their area of operation.

- Proven capacity to develop and implement equity strategies

This is an extension of 'knowledge and willingness'. Applicants should give examples of their personal involvement in implementing, monitoring and reviewing policies and programs to achieve student and staff equity goals, and provide ideas for future initiatives.